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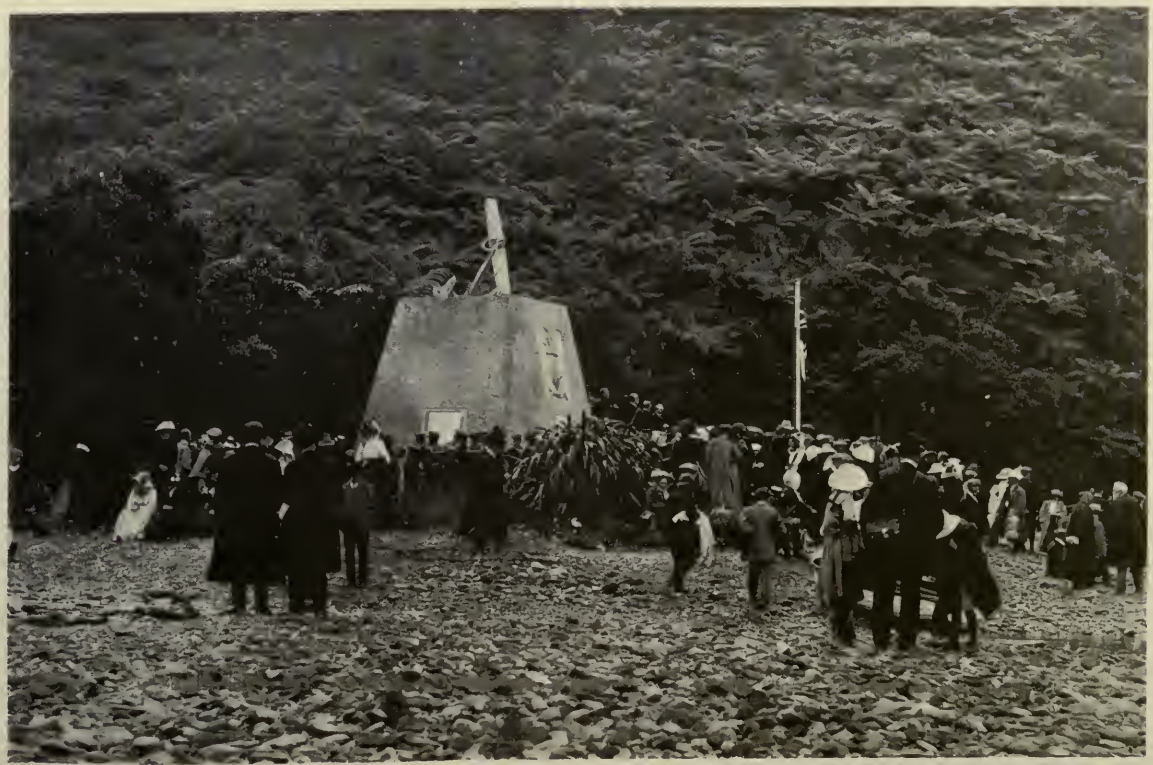
Marlborough Sounds

Edith Howes

MARLBOROUGH SOUNDS



Cook Memorial, Ship Cove, Queen Charlotte Sound, (*Aldersley, photo*)

MARLBOROUGH SOUNDS

THE WATERS OF RESTFULNESS

BY

EDITH HOWES

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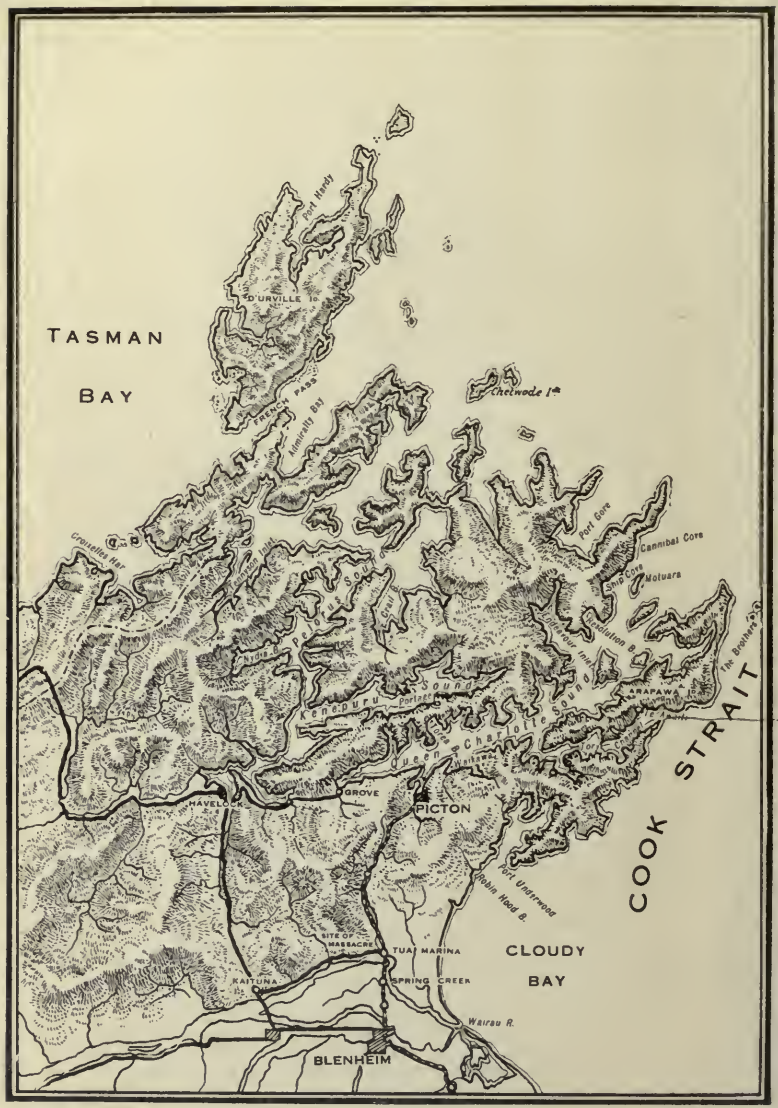
Picton 50 miles from Wgtn



THE MARLBOROUGH SOUNDS

MARLBOROUGH SOUNDS

THE WATERS OF RESTFULNESS

Restfulness is the keynote of the Marlborough Sounds. Those long stretches of placid water, shut quietly away from a rough, ungentle ocean, and winding far and far into the silent hills till each is encompassed as though it were some long-stretched lake, remote and still.....no words can adequately describe their atmosphere of peace, their amazing restfulness.

To the jaded city dweller, *en route* for Picton, the first relief from strain comes when, on entering the narrow, rocky gateways of Tory Channel, the ocean-tossing of the steamer gives way to a kindlier motion. From that moment the tense muscles and overstrung nerves begin to relax, the brain drops from its unresting alertness into a blissful calm. The spirit of the Sounds has seized on body and mind alike, healing both.

That spirit broods over all we gaze upon, as smoothly, easily, we move further in and in. Hill

after hill glides past, all bronze and green and quiet, deep-dented with the darker green of bush-filled gullies. The watery way winds this way and then that, opening up long vistas of peace in each fresh bay and wooded fiord as we pass. Even Te Awaiti, the boisterous Tar White of old whaling days, its fences made of whalebones, and its records those of violence and blood, lies still and peaceful now, shining white and red against the green of grassy slopes in a sheltered corner of Arapawa Island on our right. A trying-out plant smokes across the water on our left, with the humped, red flesh of a freshly-caught whale showing plainly on the little beach; for whaling still goes on, the season opening in these later autumn months.

In olden days right whales flocked in great numbers up from the Antarctic winter to the many bays and inlets of the New Zealand coast, seeking the quiet and sheltered waters for their young. Whalers from Sydney, from America, from England, and from other European countries hunted them, gathering great quantities of oil and bone. Many of these whalers settled on the coast and confined themselves to bay whaling, selling the oil and bone to visiting ships, or perhaps chartering a ship to take them to Sydney or to England.

In 1839 there were forty of these shore-whalers in Te Awaiti, thirty at Port Underwood, and here and there smaller settlements along the coast. Their gangs of men were often supplemented, sometimes wholly drawn, from the neighbouring Maoris; at Port Underwood a hundred Maoris helped the whites, and in Robin Hood Bay all were Maoris. The whalers

had Maori wives and half-caste children. John Guard, who brought his wife with him, was the one exception to this; and his eldest son was the first white child born in the South Island of New Zealand.

Living was not the peaceful matter in those early days that it is now in the bays. There were inter-

First Whaler's Cottage, Robin Hood Bay *(McCusker, photo)*

tribal wars in which the whalers became involved through the ardent partizanship of their native wives; there were quarrels with the Maoris which often resulted in the plundering of their stations; there were their own quarrels and fights and orgies of drunkenness and licentiousness. They were a hard-living, hard-drinking, hard-swearing community, untrammelled by the gentle amenities of life: rough, turbulent, generous, hospitable, unmerciful;

as oblivious to the reek of their oil-soaked surroundings as to the lawlessness of their ways.

But those days are gone. Though there is still a whaling station here and there, its population is small, for only an occasional whale comes now into the Sounds or goes past the shore look-out. The hunting of the past was too complete.

French Pass (*Aldersley, photo*)

In those old whaling days whales were often lost after being killed. Sometimes they were torn from their moorings by heavy seas, sometimes they had to be cut adrift to save the boats that tried to tow them through the storms. A story is told of one of these derelict dead whales saving the lives of two Maori women.

A canoe commanded by one of Rauparaha's fighting chiefs was crossing Cook Strait from the north to Arapawa Island. A heavy squall was met near The

Brothers rocks, the canoe was swamped, and all perished in the rough seas except two women. Swimming powerfully, they managed to keep afloat for some time, and then found themselves beside a huge dead whale. In its back a harpoon was firmly fixed, with a line attached. The women somehow climbed upon the whale and held on by the harpoon, and clung there for hours, though almost exhausted, until the whale drifted ashore near the entrance to Tory Channel. There they scrambled to the land, and made their way over the hills to their friends on Arapawa.

Though whales are few now in the Sounds, porpoises or blackfish are frequently seen. "They romp around the launch like great ocean-urchins, spouting jets of smoke-like spray from their spiracles. It is a pretty sight, the herd of big creatures at their graceful play. The leader of the school all at once heaves his black, shining shape out of the water, and springs clean into the air for five or six feet, describing a parabolic curve resembling nothing so much as the motion of a paddle-wheel, and dives back into the depths with a swift and easy flight of his half-ton or more of carcase. Then another and another follow, some emitting a bellow like a cow's, or loudly beating the water with their powerful tails and gambolling and flashing their sinuous bodies in the pure enjoyment of living, until the whole sea around is alive with the curious creatures, leaping the air in an ecstasy of freedom."

But on we go and on, entering now Queen Charlotte Sound. To our right opens out its passage to the sea, long and blue and narrow, ending far back in the

yellow-banded sky of early evening. On our left we pass an occulting light with its automatic gas flare that flames up and dies down, flames up and dies down every few seconds, keeping its own perfect time for months till gas re-fills are brought to replace the emptied cylinders and the ever-burning pilot light is renewed.

We draw on, past the fast-shadowing hills and coves, with here and there a lonely settler's house, and here and there an oil launch chug-chugging in the distance, till the head of the Sound appears in sight, and the roofs of Picton lie glittering in the sunshine, spread out at the foot of the hills. We land, entering upon a holiday of beauty and repose, of a health-renewing idleness, a delicious peace.

It is hard to say when Picton is more beautiful, in the fresh abundant greenness of early summer or when poplar and privet, oak and apricot stand in their autumn colouring of gold and red, waiting for the storms of winter to disclose the fine tracery of their boughs; but the nature lover who knows how to lounge delightfully through a holiday can find charm and interest here at any time.

One may hang over a little bridge leading to the Reserve and spend idle sunny hours watching the unending shoals of sardines frolicking close to the shining surface, or the shadow-like perch that start up suddenly one by one in the clear water and dart away over the sea floor, swift as a bird. Or one may fish, or row, or bathe, or walk, or do all of these in turn.

Picturesque roads lead into the hills in all directions, tracks run along the edge of the cliffs, following the

contours of the Sound. Where the hills are bare these are often blocked by landslides, for the early settlers

Track from The Portage to Picton *(McCusker, photo)*

burnt the bush that clothed the hills and held their soil in place. Now every heavy rain brings it sliding down. Those who know the beauty of green boughs hanging over water will appreciate the loss to the

The Track to Portage from Picton *(McCusker, photo)*

The Portage, Pelorus Sound *(McCusker, photo)*

Sounds, and those who love the greens and bronzes of our native bush, its lianes and mossy places and its shadowed depths, will appreciate the loss to the hills. Only where an impregnable patch has been left here and there, do we see traces of their ancient beauty. And, as so often happens, the soil beneath the bush on these steep hills proves so poor in many places, that the burning has been sheer waste of loveliness.

Yet tracks and hills alike are picturesque, for everywhere are long, softening distances, and the changeful glories of the sea. The narrow road that winds away to Blenheim has no great beauty of its own, but when you turn to retrace your steps to Picton, there lies before you a charming peep of wooded distant heights and purple slopes, with the tree-besprinkled hamlet nestling at their feet. The undulating road to Waikawa opens suddenly on to a perfect view of the gem-like bay, lying intensely blue and deeply curved, a liquid sapphire of the coast. The beautiful walk to the reservoir leads through sheltered bush tracks where still the tui strikes his golden notes, and friendly fantails flit about one's path. And the road to Shakespeare Bay winds past manuka and heath lands to bush-clad cliffs where rata blooms and tiny streams fling wet jewels over ferns and mosses, and lycopodium festoons the rocks, and deep below lie the green waters of the Sound, stretching far away to the purple softness of the encircling hills.

But in this County of Sounds the real roads are the waterways, motor launches the carriages. Up and down every Sound go the launches; there is a

whole fleet of them at Picton. And of all the pleasant days of the holiday lounger, none are so utterly and entirely restful as the days spent on the water, days long, sunny, beauty-filled and perfect. Floating over those long expanses, bright blue water all around, and bright blue sky above, glittering sunlight flashing and flitting on every little wavelet like an army of swords and scimitars fleeing ever down the sunward track, bathed in light that floods the air and lies in shining bands far along the sea, one basks in brilliance and begins to feel the splendid cleanness there may be in life. The hills shut out the futile fevered days of problems and despairs, and only peace is left, and a new beginning and a wider hope.

Perhaps on a crisp autumn morning the inner soothe and gladness are most marked, when fewer voices break the friendly silence, and the white mists lift themselves and drape the lonely peaks in filmy loveliness, and the waters slowly change from the grey of steel through shades of olive to the vivid green of emerald, and a splendid radiance breaks across the world.

As we approach, the hills rise up and seem to roll away, drenched with sunlight, golden and green and tawny, or red with burns while we are near, darkly blue and purple as they recede, softly, palely, translucently blue in the farthest distance, where they tower against the sky behind the lower ridges. One sees them gradually as the tops of sunken mountains, invaded of old by a sea which filled their valleys and made fiords of their winding passes and islets of their isolated heights. The two great sounds with their lesser arms, Queen Charlotte Sound with Tory

Picton Harbour

(McCusker, photo)

Kenepuru Sound (*Aldersley, photo*)

The Wharf, Elaine Bay, Pelorus Sound (*Aldersley, photo*)

Channel, and Pelorus Sound with Kenepuru Sound and the lovely Tennyson Inlet, form an amazing network of winding waterways, deep, safe, generally tranquil, a magnificent naval base for future days, perhaps.

Wherever he could find foothold of flat land or gentle slope the settler has established himself, clearing —all too effectively—building, fencing, stocking, planting, making from the wilderness a home. In the sheltered bays there are homesteads, in far outlandish places there are surprisingly good accommodation houses, where least one would expect them. From house to long-distant house the motor launches speed, carrying mails, passengers, and goods.

Voyaging with the mails, one may economically see most of the noted beauty-spots of the Sounds. Starting from Picton, Queen Charlotte Sound and Tory Channel may be investigated, Te Awaiti, Endeavour Inlet, Resolution Bay, Ship Cove, and Motuara Island being of special interest. Or one may land at Torea Bay, walk a pleasant mile with a magnificent view over the narrow neck of land to the Portage, and from there voyage up Kenepuru Sound to the Heads, returning to Picton with the afternoon mails.

Or on certain days one may voyage from Picton to the Grove, and thence coach by a picturesque road to Havelock, from whence one may explore Pelorus Sound, more bushed and therefore even more beautiful than Queen Charlotte Sound. Here one may visit Nydia Bay and Crail Bay and Tennyson Inlet, most beautiful of all, and perhaps one may venture out into wider waters and make the

Torea, Queen Charlotte Sound (*Aldersley, photo*)

Crail Bay, Pelorus Sound, N.Z. (*Aldersley, photo*)

acquaintance of D'Urville Island, with its wonderful overhanging cliffs, and its myriad wooded bays and islets.

So broken and so deeply dented is this northern coast of the South Island, that in its long hill-enclosed fiords, its magnificent harbours, one may cruise five

Ship Cove *(By courtesy of Mr. Russell Duncan)*

Captain Cook first anchored here on 16th January, 1770, and visited it on four occasions afterwards.

hundred sheltered miles, among green islands and many-curved peninsulas and lovely bays, before one emerges again into Cook Strait, "the wind-pipe of the Pacific," that narrow stretch of water which Captain Cook at first imagined to be but a specially deep bay, till he climbed one of the high hills beside Ship Cove and saw the strait opening out into a great sea on either side, and separating his new country into islands.

Historically, the Sounds country is of fascinating interest. Not only does it contain remains of the old pit villages and cremation mounds of Moriori tribes, the race anterior to the Maoris, not only is it full of Maori story and vicissitude of feud and fight and occupation, but for South Islanders it is the starting point of their country's history as a portion of the British Empire, for it was here that the Union Jack was first hoisted in the South Island by Captain Cook on the 31st of January, 1770.

Cook, "the ablest and most renowned navigator that England or any other country hath produced," was sent out by George III. to make complete observations of the transit of Venus, and also to explore the Pacific Ocean. It was in his able fulfilment of the latter part of the plan that he sailed on the 15th January, 1770, into that beautiful little bay in Queen Charlotte Sound which has ever since been called Ship Cove. Here, a quarter of a mile from the forest-draped shore, the anchor of the *Endeavour* was dropped, and here Cook was awakened next morning by the dawn-song of the bell-birds and the tuis, "like small bells most exquisitely tuned," as he wrote in his diary. And here, around the monument since raised to the great explorer, the notes of bell-bird and tui still resound, for this notable spot has been wisely preserved and set apart as a scenic reserve.

Here for three weeks Cook stayed, cleaning and repairing the *Endeavour,* renewing the ship's supply of water, replacing rotten timbers with fresh wood from the forest, bartering with Maoris and studying them, and exploring such parts of the Sound as could

Another view of Ship Cove, Queen Charlotte Sound

(By courtesy of Mr. Russell Duncan)

(By courtesy of Mr. Russell Duncan)

In the foreground is the highest point of Motuara Island. Where the handkerchief lies is the spot where Capt. Cook erected a post. He took possession on 31st January, 1770.

(By courtesy of Mr. Russell Duncan)

Site of fortified pa detached from south end of Motuara Island. Captain Furneaux of the "Adventure" erected an observatory on this rock.

be safely explored in boats without coming into collision with the somewhat uncertain natives. And here he set up a great pole, hoisting upon it the Union Jack.

On the topmost point of Motuara Island near by he raised another pole and ran up the British flag, formally taking possession of the land in the name of his king, and in the presence of his officers and of the chief men of the Maori pa close by. Standing in full view of the magnificent stretch of water below, he named it Queen Charlotte Sound, in honour of the consort of George III. He and his officers then drank a bottle of wine between them to complete the ceremony, and the empty bottle was conferred on the old Maori chief, to his great delight! The empty bottle has been looked upon since as emblematic of the treatment of the Maori in respect to native lands.

Three years later, Cook again visited the Sounds, in company with Furneaux. Their two ships, the *Resolution* and the *Adventure,* spent varying periods in the shelter of Ship Cove, and gardens were made on Motuara Island, and goats and sheep donated to the Maoris and set free within the bush. In the Motuara garden were grown the first potatoes in New Zealand. About the bush in that island carrots and parsnips still grow wild, with green resplendent tops three feet in height, and roots small and inedible!

It was during this visit that nine men from the *Adventure* were set upon and massacred by the Maoris, and were cooked and eaten on the shores of Grass Cove, the Otanerua of the natives. This, in spite of the fact that Cook had vigorously discouraged cannibalism, and had introduced vegetables and

animals to the Maoris, instructing them in the care and use of both. On his third visit he liberated poultry and pigs in the bush round Cannibal Cove, a little to the north of Ship Cove. The pigs, at any rate, flourished and increased through the land, becoming a substitute for human flesh, and leaving less excuse for cannibalism.

Inland from Picton, due south through the winding Picton Valley, we come out upon Tua Marina, the "Look Out" hill of the Maoris, where seventy years later the Wairau massacre took place, that last outbreak of the Maoris against the invading pakeha in this beautiful country of the Sounds.

Below Tua Marina lies the richly fertile plain of the Wairau River, dotted now with villages and farms. Far in the distance lies Blenheim, the little capital city of the province; nearer to us is the beautiful Spring Creek, with its willowed banks and mossed and ferny corners and little foaming cataract by the mill; down towards the sea are the Marshlands, drained by pumping and by great open waterways, where tractors flatten the raupo to the ground with their heavy rollers, in order that the grass may grow and sheep may live.

All this may be seen from Tua Marina to-day, but in 1843 bush and scrub and raupo covered all the plain, and only Maori residents were there. Colonel Wakefield, on behalf of the New Zealand Company, claimed that he had bought this great tract of country from a Captain Blenkinsopp, who in his turn had acquired a dubious title to the land by tricking Rauparaha, the island-chief of evil fame. Rauparaha had been deceived into signing away the plain for an

(*By courtesy of Mr. Russell Duncan*)

Grass Cove, scene of the Massacre of Mr. Rowe, Mr. Woodhouse and eight of the crew of the "Adventure," on 17th December, 1773. Grass Cove is known to the people of the Sound as Nott's Bay. Its Maori name is Otanerua.

(*Mc Cusker, photo*)

Captain Blenkinsopp's Cannon, now in Seymour Square, Blenheim

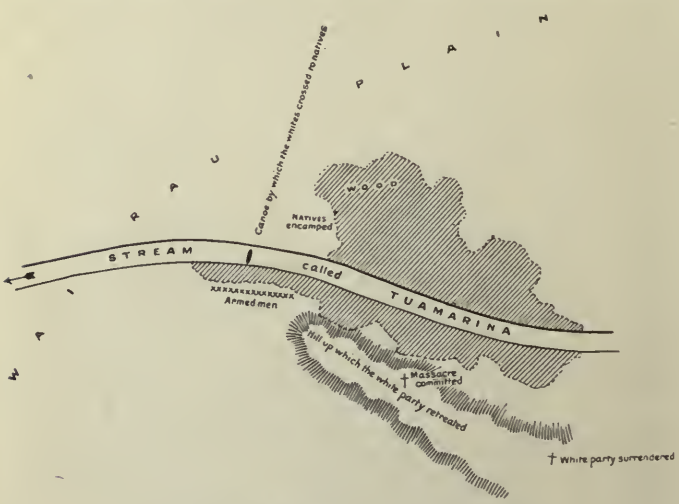
old ship's cannon, under the impression that he was giving merely the right to wood and water for Blenkinsopp's ship. When he discovered the imposture he tore his copy of the paper into shreds, and left the cannon lying on the shore. Colonel Wakefield bought Blenkinsopp's copy from his widow, and claimed the land.

Rauparaha disputed the claim, as did the resident Maoris also; but the Wakefield brothers, eager to fulfil rash promises made in England to waiting Nelson settlers, ordered a survey of the land. When the survey was almost completed, Rauparaha, hearing of it, came down from Kapiti with canoes and a hundred armed warriors and his companion chief, Rangihaeata, and burned the surveyors' toe-toe camps, deporting the surveyors themselves with all their instruments and personal equipment most carefully to the pa at the mouth of the Wairau River, and treating them in such a way as to show plainly that it was only the occupation of the land to which he was hostile.

When the news of this burning was taken to Nelson, Captain Wakefield, ill-advised by the magistrate, instituted an expedition for the purpose of arresting Rauparaha to be tried for arson. He and the magistrate, Mr. Thompson, who had issued the warrant, together with several officials and some of the intending settlers, backed up by the chief constable and twenty-four labouring men who had been sworn in as special constables, sailed from Nelson and were landed at the mouth of the Wairau river. Following the surveyors' track, they came upon the Maoris at the foot of the Tua Marina hills, on the further side of the Tua Marina stream.

Port Underwood (*McCusker, photo*

Parleying began, and the Maoris sent over one of their canoes for the leaders of the whites, who were unarmed. But Rauparaha, secure in the justice of his land claim, and unaware of arson as a crime, refused to be arrested, and there was an angry scene. The chief magistrate seems to have been a man of misdirected determination and splenetic temper, and he



An early newspaper sketch of the scene of conflict

tried to force the handcuffs on the haughty chief. A threatening movement from the Maoris caused a rush forward from the Englishmen on the opposite bank of the stream, and in the confusion one of the special constables slipped and his gun went off.

The Maoris took this for the intentional beginning of battle, and fired a volley at the whites, to which the whites replied. The tragedy had begun. The white men had soon to retreat before overwhelming

The Wairau Massacre Monument.

numbers; the Maoris crossed the stream and pursued them, killing as they went. They had at first spared the unarmed leaders, allowing them to cross safely to their men; but in the end, when in the chase they took them as they surrendered on the face of the hill, they massacred them one and all with their tomahawks.

Some of the men escaped by hiding in the bush and descending into the plain. Some died of wounds; some struggled through the scrub and made their way to Nelson or Port Underwood at last, half dead with long hunger and exposure.

At the enquiry afterwards it was decided that the white men were to blame in the affair, and that the New Zealand Company held no charter for the land. Later, under the governorship of Sir George Grey, the Wairau Plain was bought from Rauparaha, many thousands of pounds being paid over to him. The old ship's cannon for which he was alleged to have sold the land, still stands in Blenheim publicly, a relic of the futile fatal trick that caused the bitter tragedy. On Tua Marina Hill stands a monumental block to the memory of those who met their ghastly fate upon that spot on the 17th June, 1843.

Yet all this is now but a tale that is told. Those old times are dead. Peace reigns over the land as over the waters of the Sounds. The Maori lives and labours side by side with the pakeha, the blue sky bends over the blue sea and the blue hills, and the visitor finds the scene one of far-spread beauty and delicious restfulness.

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